

Assembly Speaker **Sheldon Silver** *Press Release*



For Immediate Release:
November 2, 2006

Silver, Tonko Announce \$3.85 Million For Beech-Nut Plant Equipment Purchase

***Mainstay of Mohawk Valley Economy To Modernize Canajoharie
Production Operations, Creating New Employment Opportunities***

Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Assemblyman Paul Tonko (D-Amsterdam) today announced the Assembly is providing \$3.85 million in Assembly capital funds to help the Hero Corporation purchase new production equipment for its Beech-Nut Plant in Canajoharie.

Silver and Tonko said the new equipment is part of a modernization effort expected to result in 39 new jobs. They said the funding also would help the company recover from damages caused by this summer's flooding along the Mohawk River.

At a morning news conference at the Beech-Nut plant, Silver and Tonko discussed the critical economic presence the company has had in the state and nearby communities over the years as well as the impact these funds would have on the plant's facilities and workforce.

"The Beech-Nut plant has been a fixture along the New York State Thruway for many decades and along the Mohawk River for even longer. Beech-Nut products are sold in grocery stores across the nation and Canada, showcasing the high-quality crops of New York's family farms and its first-rate agriculture industry. Its presence in our state has not only been a source of great pride but has also been an economic asset both as an employer and as a high-volume buyer of produce grown by the region's farmers," said Silver.

"This investment will allow the Hero company to secure Beech-Nut's future in New York State and help them modernize the plant so that it can remain competitive in the marketplace and provide real employment opportunities to New Yorkers," Silver added.

"This \$3.85 million grant will help Beech-Nut make important capital investments that will spur growth in the manufacturing of their world-renowned food products and create jobs that will help revitalize our local economy," said Tonko. "Our communities were devastated this summer by the flooding disaster that damaged businesses and homes throughout the region. This is a huge step forward as we begin the long process of recovery, restoration and revival in the Mohawk Valley. My hope is that as we rebuild, we will grow ever stronger. I want to thank Speaker Silver for his leadership and long-standing commitment to re-energizing the upstate economy."

"Today, the grant award confirmation letter that we are receiving is greatly appreciated and shows us that the community and state are willing to work with us to allow Beech-Nut to remain a viable entity in the infant feeding



Assemblyman Tonko addresses reporters at news conference to announce a \$3.85 million investment in the Beech-Nut food processing plant in Canajoharie. (From Left) Tonko is joined by Beech-Nut / Hero Group Officials Mark Knotts, Vice-President for Operations and CEO and President Christoph Rudolf



(Left) Tonko and Beech-Nut / Hero Group CEO and President Christoph Rudolf explain how the company plans to use the investment funds to purchase new equipment to modernize their production operations and increase workforce levels to meet growing demand for the company's baby food products.



The Beech-Nut company is has a worldwide reputation for producing high-quality baby food products, using produce grown by the state's family farms and first-rate agriculture industry.

category," said Beech-Nut / Hero Group CEO and President Christoph Rudolf.

The Canajoharie facility will be updated to meet the growing demand for Beech-Nut's products as a result of new orders and expanding markets. The company will modernize the plant's food-packaging operations with the purchase of such equipment as a 16 oz. cereal packaging line, a 12-count packaging line with labelers, conveyors with robotic palletizers and pre- and post-glass inspection equipment. According to Beech-Nut officials, the increased production levels resulting from the new equipment purchase are expected to create up to 30 jobs by the end of 2007.



The Beech-Nut Canajoharie plant has been an economic mainstay in the state's Mohawk Valley region for the past century.

The speaker saw firsthand the destruction this summer's flooding caused to the Beech-Nut operation when he and Tonko toured the flood-ravaged communities along the Mohawk River in late June. At that time, Silver indicated the Assembly would be supportive to the area's recovery efforts. Today's announcement is part of the Assembly commitment to provide assistance to the people and businesses affected by the extensive water damage as they struggle to re-establish their lives, Silver and Tonko said.

The Beech-Nut Nutrition Corporation is based out of St. Louis, Missouri, and is owned by the Hero Group, which is a worldwide food manufacturer with headquarters in Lenzburg, Switzerland. Hero is one of the world's leading producers of high-quality baby foods and formula, jams and preserves and other food products.

-30-

Statement of Speaker Sheldon Silver Regarding Beech-Nut Announcement

Canajoharie, NY November 2, 2006

The credit for this announcement belongs to your accomplished Assemblyman, Paul Tonko.

No one believes in the potential of Montgomery County more than he does. No one understands this region's needs

more clearly, no one fights harder for its working families than does Paul Tonko.

It is at his insistence that "The People's House of the New York State Legislature" is pledging its support to Beech-Nut and to Canajoharie here today. It was at Paul's insistence that the Assembly funded the retrofitting of local dairy farms to make them more energy efficient. It is Assemblyman Paul Tonko who has driven our support for waterfront development here in Montgomery County.

He is a true public servant and a real leader, and I am proud to represent him as Speaker of the Assembly.

This pledge of \$3.85 million is a demonstration of two important commitments.

The first is a joint commitment between this State and Beech-Nut to help this revered company grow stronger and more productive, and to ensure that it maintains a sound, permanent presence in this community.

It is our joint commitment to bring national recognition that the Beech-Nut label is recognized as the maker of the world's finest baby food. It is also our joint commitment to strengthen agriculture as well as the food industry. From our farms to our suppliers to our processors to our wholesalers and retailers, we want New York State to be "number one" all along this important "economic food chain."

Additionally, today's announcement is part of our joint commitment to bring more jobs into Montgomery County. Of the roughly 2.8 million jobs now in Upstate New York, Montgomery County represents less than 20,000 of those jobs.

Of the 4,200 manufacturing jobs in this county, Beech-Nut accounts for approximately 300 of those jobs. It is critical to Canajoharie and to this region that we take every step to encourage Beech-Nut to expand its operations here.

Our second commitment is to a "jobs plan" that in simplest terms requires that we build stronger regional economies.

Better that we build upon the assets we already have: Beech-Nut, our farmers, our natural resources, and our great colleges and universities. Better to rely on public/private partnerships to spur job growth than to rely on political whim. Better to help our manufacturers to modernize facilities so that they remain competitive in this global marketplace. Better to train our workers so that they have the skills needed today.

That is the smart, sensible, modern approach to job growth that Paul and I and our Assembly colleagues have been acting on for more than a decade, and urging the Governor and the Senate to embrace for equally as long.

Beech-Nut and the State of New York have been partners for more than a hundred years. That is not a partnership to be taken lightly. I can't say enough about what this company means to Canajoharie and what your high-quality foods have meant to the youth of this Nation.

To Beech-Nut, I simply say, "Thank You" for maintaining your commitment to New York State and to this Region. Let us keep our partnership strong and healthy so that the children of Canajoharie will not only grow up healthy and strong thanks to the finest baby food on the market, but will be able to remain in their hometowns, because the Upstate economy is healthy and strong, and jobs are plentiful.

Thank you.

New York State Assembly
[[Welcome Page](#)] [[Press Releases](#)]